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Intelligence Memorandum

*Military Capabilities and Intentions of Communist
Forces in Vietnam Over the Next Thirty Days
(I.E., through 23 July 1972)*

Prepared Jointly by the Central Intelligence Agency
and the Defense Intelligence Agency

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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
DEFENSE INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
23 June 1972

INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM

MILITARY CAPABILITIES AND INTENTIONS OF COMMUNIST
FORCES IN VIETNAM OVER THE NEXT THIRTY DAYS
(I.E. THROUGH 23 July 1972)*

Summary and Conclusions

1. North Vietnamese main force units began what may be a major new attack in Military Region 1 of South Vietnam on 22 June, although by 23 June the action appeared to have at least temporarily abated. If South Vietnamese forces perform as expected, the enemy probably cannot capture Hue. Nonetheless, if the Communists are willing to accept heavy losses, they have the capability to continue sustained offensive operations in this area for at least the one-month period covered by this memorandum. In MR-2 and MR-3, Communist main force units still retain a substantial offensive capability after the past several months of fighting. Given their losses, however, they will be unable, in the next few weeks, to launch assaults on as large a scale as they did in April and May of this year. In the Delta, where the level of enemy activity has been low to moderate until recently, action could intensify considerably in the next several weeks, although the magnitude of fighting there will almost certainly remain below that which is possible in MR-1.

2. The likelihood of an unforeseen major enemy attack--a large-scale attack by enemy main force units--is fairly small. In most areas of South Vietnam we have good intelligence coverage on the location and movements of most Communist main force units. There are probably no large enemy reinforcements which

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could be brought in as combat-ready units without our foreknowledge. A radical shift in Communist strategy, such as a withdrawal from South Vietnam's MR-3 for an attack on Phnom Penh, seems highly unlikely. All evidence indicates that the Communists intend to continue concentrating on the war in South Vietnam, which they consistently label as the "main battlefield." The Communists have some capacity for tactical surprise in MR-1, since the precise location of some of their units there is uncertain. They could perhaps also achieve a degree of tactical surprise in the provinces immediately to the west of Saigon. Several enemy regiments which were hurt badly in the fighting around An Loc have not been located by radio direction finding or other reliable sources for some weeks. It is probable that these units have been resupplied and have already received some replacements, and that they could suddenly launch headline-creating attacks toward the GVN capital. The South Vietnamese are fully aware that these units are somewhere in the areas involved, however, and ARVN has the mobility which should enable it to react quickly to any attack.

3. Communist local forces will also continue to maintain pressure wherever they can in South Vietnam during the period covered by this memorandum. They will, for example, keep trying to reduce the government's presence in the countryside in coastal MR-2, as well as in southern MR-1 and the Delta. Some additional district towns may come under attack, and it is always possible that the Communists will achieve one or more eyecatching local successes in some part of the country. Without main force assistance, however, the capabilities of Communist local forces in South Vietnam are such that they are unlikely to play a major military role anywhere during the period we are considering.

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Strength of Enemy Forces

4. The NVA/VC order of battle in the principal high-threat areas in and adjacent to South Vietnam is shown in the following table.

<u>Area</u>	<u>Divisions</u>	<u>Regiments</u>	<u>Battalions</u>
North Vietnam (South of Dong Hoi)	1	2	9
Northern MR 1	3	26	99
Central Highlands	2	10	55
Northwest MR 3	2	8	46
"Parrot's Beak" and northern MR 4	2	6	23

The map on the following page lists the major enemy units located not only in the above high-threat areas, but in all other parts of South Vietnam where there are concentrations of enemy forces. In the following paragraphs we discuss Communist capabilities and intentions in each major section of the country.

The Hue Area

5. On 22 June, after more than a month and a half of preparations, the Communists made heavy ground and artillery attacks along the western end of the My Chanh defense line, though these attacks abated at least temporarily the following day. Enemy communications allege that the "immediate mission" of the attacking forces is to "prepare" to "liberate Thua Thien Province and Hue." Communist messages suggest that the offensive will consist of at least two phases, with the first possibly to run from 22 to 29 June. The Communists probably hope to forestall any major government counterattack to regain ground lost to the Communists in Quang Tri.

6. There are three North Vietnamese infantry divisions--the 304th, 308th and the 324B--and a total of 26 infantry, artillery, and armor regimental headquarters deployed around Hue in an arc from the northwest to the southwest. (These forces include 99 infantry battalions and the majority of the Communists' operational tanks in MR-1, estimated to be around 80. In addition, the enemy has a heavy concentration of antiaircraft artillery in the area.) Elements of another division, the 325th, have also been sent into northern South Vietnam.

Although practically all enemy units in northern MR-1 have taken heavy losses and several regiments may still be understrength, their continued presence on and near the battlefield suggests that the Communist command still considers them employable. The Communists may be prepared to move the rest of the 325th Division into battle if the situation so requires.

7. Whether or not an all-out assault on Hue is now beginning, the North Vietnamese can be expected to maintain a high degree of pressure on South Vietnamese forces in MR-1 during the next 30 days. They have made a concerted effort over the past six weeks to move supplies of all kinds into the area. In the northern part of the region, relatively clear, dry weather will prevail through August 1972. While allowing the enemy greater mobility and resupply capabilities, the weather will also, of course, facilitate Allied air and naval interdiction operations.

Southern MR-1

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8. The Communists are also likely to increase their activity in the southern three provinces of MR-1. [REDACTED] predict that new enemy assaults will be launched in Quang Nam Province during the last week of June 1972, and it is possible that the enemy's 711th Division might threaten Hoi An and Da Nang. At the same time, the NVA 3rd Division could move toward Quang Ngai City from Binh Dinh Province where it is currently engaged. Further rocket and sapper attacks on Da Nang seem certain, and some of them could be spectacular.

The Central Highlands

9. The threat of another round of enemy attacks on Kontum City in the near future appears to be lessening as a number of Communist units have moved away from the immediate area. Nevertheless, the enemy still has in the general vicinity of Kontum two divisional headquarters, ten regimental headquarters, and about 55 battalions. Although

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the Communist forces arrayed around Kontum are still capable of launching an attack on the city to tie down ARVN forces, the next assault will probably be less intense than the last round, both because Communist forces have been weakened and because the weather has deteriorated since May.

10. Throughout the highlands, the enemy's reinforcement and logistic capabilities will become increasingly limited in future weeks. Muddy roads and impassable streams are already inhibiting Communist operations in the area, and the problems caused by weather will get worse before they get better. The difficulties facing the enemy in using armor and moving artillery will become progressively more severe. Allied air power will also be affected by the weather, but to a lesser degree. While the rains are heavy enough to keep the roads and trails muddy all of the time, there are enough periods of good weather to allow fairly frequent use of air resources, though these resources sometimes cannot be employed when they are needed.

Coastal MR 2

11. The Communists will maintain their pressure in Phu My District of Binh Dinh Province, where they have a reasonably good chance of adding both to their territorial holdings and to the number of people they control. We doubt that enemy main force units will try to move farther south into the Korean area of operations. Action on a local level will also continue in Phu Yen Province. We do not, however, anticipate a sharp upsurge in offensive action in this area.

Western MRs 3 and 4

12. The Communists almost certainly plan to push hard in the provinces near the Cambodian "Parrot's Beak." The Viet Cong 5th Division has recently appeared in this vicinity apparently after a quick re-fitting in Cambodia. This division has taken substantial casualties in its first thrust into Kien

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Tuong Province, but it appears still determined to press the offensive. The Communists have also been consolidating their independent infantry regiments in the area under new divisional headquarters. The Communists' 7th and 9th Divisions--also weakened by heavy casualties--apparently are still somewhere in or near Binh Long Province, although direction finding has not located some of their subordinate units for weeks.

13. The threat opposite the Parrot's Beak is not yet fully defined. Government positions in any of the provinces from Tay Ninh and Binh Long south to Kien Phong and Dinh Tuong could come under attack, and a Communist operation against a provincial capital such as Tay Ninh is a reasonable possibility. From now on, however, bad weather will complicate operations on both sides. The Communists obviously hope to increase the threat to Saigon through gains in this region. Although a main-force thrust at Saigon itself is unlikely in the next 30 days, rocket strikes and sapper attacks around the capital may well increase.

Eastern MR 3

14. Activity of the two North Vietnamese regiments in Phuoc Tuy Province has slackened off recently, but these regiments have interdicted some of the province's main roads and they are still threatening three district towns. We anticipate no sharp increase from the present level of enemy military activity, nor do we expect vigorous counteraction from the available government forces any time soon. Even without any further major effort, the Communists now have de facto control of much of the province.

The Lower Delta

15. The provinces in the western part of the lower Delta are likely to be the scene of continuing Communist military activity, at a higher level than has occurred to date but still on a relatively modest scale and aimed mainly at government outposts and district towns. The Communists have four regiments

in Chuong Thien Province, but there is no good evidence of planning for a major campaign here in the next few weeks. The principal enemy objective so far has been to expand and secure logistic corridors in this area. If the main force combat regiments of the Phuoc Long Front (formerly known as the NVA First Division) should be able to move into the Delta, the likelihood of an assault on a provincial capital would increase. Here as elsewhere in the southern two thirds of the country, however, progressively heavier rains are already beginning to inhibit military action on both sides.

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